



**DEVO
TIONS**

FOR YOUR FIRST WEEK OF COLLEGE

COLLEGE ORIENTATION DEVO 01

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU EXPERIENCED A POWER OUTAGE?

Maybe you were sitting in a classroom and the emergency lights came on and you wondered if this meant you got the rest of the day off. Maybe there was a huge thunderstorm in your town and whole streets went dark. Or maybe you were at home and your sister tripped the breaker with her excessive hair dryer use. No matter what the cause, **it can be a strange feeling when the power goes down and the lights go out**—even if you're still in your own house.

Sure, in some ways it's kind of fun. After all, no power in the kitchen means s'mores for dinner on the camping stove. But in other ways it's a little disorienting. You have to think about every single step just so you don't run into walls. It's not that you're scared of the dark (or at least not *that* scared). It's just that everything, suddenly, feels a little unfamiliar.

We bring it up because, for a lot of us, **heading off to college orientation is a little like finding yourself in the dark**. For the first time in a long time, or maybe ever, you're entering somewhere without really knowing where to go, what to do, or what the next step is. And in some ways, that's kind of exciting. It's fun to not know what's going to happen or who you're going to meet next. But at the same time, it can make you a little nervous. After all, when *everything* is unfamiliar, it can be really hard to know if you're making the right choices, going the right places, or headed in the right direction.

Before we go any further, let us put your mind at ease: **College orientation feels like walking in the dark for everybody**. Even if a few other students look like they know where they're going or what they're doing, they're probably still feeling in the dark in some ways. Everyone is new and most likely equally confused about where to go or what to do next.

The question is what do you do about it? How are you supposed to keep moving forward when it feels like you can't see anything clearly?

In the Bible, there's a collection of proverbs, or wise sayings, that King Solomon wrote for young adults (possibly his own sons), called Proverbs. In chapter 3, he writes:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight."

PROVERBS 3:5-6, NIV

That first line, where it says "don't lean on or depend on your own understanding," doesn't mean you should give up on logic, quit thinking, or mindlessly go with the flow. After all, God gave you a brain for a reason. It just means our understanding has limits. It means that **there will be times your own understanding of a situation isn't enough**. Solomon probably knew that, like us, his sons would encounter new situations, new places, and new challenges. And any time you're in a new place, it's hard to have all the information you need to see things clearly.

So what does Solomon tell his sons to do?

A few things:

01 TRUST GOD.

02 SUBMIT TO (OR ACKNOWLEDGE OR CONSIDER OR INVITE) HIM INTO THE PROCESS.

In other words, follow Him to the best of your ability and then trust Him to fill in the gaps. Trust Him to point you in the right direction. Trust Him, as Solomon says, to make your path straight. Even when you aren't sure where you're going or how it's all going to turn out, follow Him and trust Him to get you to what's next.

When the power goes out, the first thing you reach for is your phone. You flip on the flashlight and use it to walk around, hoping the tiny circle of light it creates is enough to keep you from

stepping on something and hurting yourself. And for the next few days, we want those verses (from Proverbs 3:5-6) to act like a phone flashlight for you. Will they illuminate everything so you can see clearly? Probably not. But they will give you just enough light to take the next step as you are adjusting to this brand-new stage of life.

And for now, that's all you need.

TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND THINK ABOUT THE PARTS OF COLLEGE WHERE YOU FEEL A LITTLE IN THE DARK OR CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT TO DO.

SPEND A FEW MINUTES PRAYING ABOUT THOSE AREAS.

ASK YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER TO GIVE YOU THE WISDOM TO SEE THE NEXT STEP AND THE COURAGE TO TRUST HIM ALONG THE WAY.



COLLEGE ORIENTATION DEVO 02

HAVE YOU EVER FELT DISORIENTED?

If you've been on one of those carnival rides at the boardwalk near the beach that spins you vertically, horizontally, and diagonally, you may relate to what I'm talking about. When you step off those rides it can hard to know which way is up, which way is down, and how to keep your funnel cake in your stomach, where it belongs.

Even if you've never been on a ride like this (wise choice) you probably know what it feels like to be disoriented. **When things are happening quickly and we're not sure what to do or where to go next or what we should be paying attention to, it's easy to lose our bearings.**

That's why it's kind of ironic that the next few days are called college orientation. In some ways, nothing could be more DISorienting. Chances are you will . . .

- Hear from a lot of speakers
- Meet a ton of people
- Visit dorms
- Figure out financial aid (or try)
- Talk about class schedules
- Get lost
- Learn about on-campus clubs
- Meet even more people
- Try to understand how the cafeteria works
- Have a lot of fun
- Have a lot of questions

And with all that going on at the same time, it's normal to feel a little, well, disoriented. And if that happens, here's something to keep in mind:

Long before Jesus walked the earth, long before the people of Israel had a home, a young leader named Joshua entered an entirely new situation. Very quickly, he went from being a regular guy to being the guy in charge of an entire nation. Things got intense—fast. And in the midst of what probably felt like chaos, an older, wiser leader named Moses stepped in and said this:

“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord will personally go ahead of you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

DEUTERONOMY 31:8, NLT

And while those words were intended for an ancient Jewish guy named Joshua, they are still true for us. No matter where we go, God is there first. **He goes ahead of us and somehow He also never leaves our side.** No matter how far or near college is to where we grew up, God is there with us and He has been there the whole time. No matter where you are and no matter what you do, your Heavenly Father is your true north. Keep your eye on Him and you won't get lost or disoriented.

If you've watched a professional ice skater or ball room dancer, you know how amazing it is when they do they spins and turns so quickly they look like a blur to those watching. And when they're done they don't look nearly as disoriented as someone coming off one of those carnival rides. How? It's all thanks to a little skill called "spotting." When a dancer or gymnast begins to spin, they also begin to spot one area on the wall or ahead of them that helps them remember where they are in space. It helps their brain focus.

And that's what we want you to do over the next few days. **Spot your Heavenly Father.**

Pick something that is true about Him and remind yourself of it every time something new happens, every time you're in a new situation, a new environment, or with new people. Maybe that means you pick part of the verse we looked at today:

- Do not be afraid.
- The Lord will personally go ahead of you.
- He will be with you.
- He will neither fail you nor abandon you.

**MAYBE YOU PICK A DIFFERENT PHRASE.
NO MATTER WHAT YOU PICK,**

**FIND SOMETHING THAT KEEPS
YOUR EYE ON WHAT'S TRUE
ABOUT YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

**AND REPEAT IT OVER AND OVER
TO YOURSELF THIS WEEK.**

**WHAT'S ONE WORD, PHRASE, OR TRUTH
YOU WANT TO HANG ONTO THIS WEEK?**



**ASK FOR GOD'S HELP IN KEEPING THAT TRUTH
AT THE FRONT OF YOUR MIND THIS WEEK.**

COLLEGE ORIENTATION DEVO 03

**THINK ABOUT EVERYTHING YOU'VE EXPERIENCED
OVER THE LAST FEW DAYS.**

WHAT WERE
SOME THINGS
THAT WENT JUST
AS YOU EXPECTED?

WHAT WERE SOME
THINGS THAT
SURPRISED YOU?

Chances are you experienced a lot of expected and unexpected things. Good, not-so-good, exciting, overwhelming, scary, fun, boring, and everything in between. That's what college orientation is like for a lot of people. And in some ways, that's what college is going to be like—experiences that generate a whole range of emotions.

Don't worry. It won't always be quite this intense, but for the next year or so you will be experiencing a whole lot of new. Perhaps you'll have . . .

- New classmates
- New schedules
- New roommates
- New buildings
- New town
- New finances
- New rules
- New freedom

And **while new can be a really good thing** (is there anything better than a new haircut or a new pair of kicks?), **it also means you suddenly have more choices than you've ever had before.** Will you live on campus or off? Meal plan or no? Join clubs? Play sports? Rush for the Greek life? Will you dress the same way you did in high school or try a different style? Study the same way you used to (or used *not* to) or do things differently? Hang out with the same kind of people you always have or join some new groups?

And maybe one of the questions that has crossed your mind is this: *Will I have the same kind of faith I had in high school?* Or maybe you thought it this way: *Will I still be a Christian in college?* Maybe you've heard people talk about college students leaving their faith and it's made you wonder if that kind of walking away is inevitable. Or maybe you know it's possible, but wonder how exactly it works to be a person of faith and a normal human on a college campus.

The good news is this: You don't have to figure it all out today. Your faith can grow and change and, yes, still exist, long after you start your college career. But for today, we want you to keep something in mind Jesus said that may surprise you.

In his account of Jesus' life, John records an interaction Jesus had with the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the day. And in the course of their conversation, Jesus said this:

**"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;
I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."**

JOHN 10:10, NIV

Did you catch that last word? “Full.” Other translators have used the word “abundant,” but the Greek word John originally used there means “superior, more than enough, beyond expectation, remarkable, or uncommon.” In other words, John says **Jesus wants us to have life . . . but not just any life.** He wants us to have more life, a better life, life with the volume all the way up. And we’re filling in the gaps here, but we happen to think Jesus wants your college life to be that way too.

If we’re honest, many of us think this is the opposite of what Jesus wants for us. It’s tempting to think God’s goal for us is to have life *minus* all the good stuff. Life—but only the boring kind. Life—but without anything exciting or enjoyable. And Jesus is telling this crowd of followers and us that we couldn’t be further from the truth. He’s basically saying, “I didn’t come to steal, kill or destroy your life. That’s not me. I came to make your life better and fuller than you would have ever imagined.”

So the question is, are you in for a life like that? Are you open to taking Jesus at His word and walking with Him into the next phase of your life *starting now*?

**FOR THE NEXT FEW MINUTES, PRAY OVER
YOUR FRESHMAN YEAR IN COLLEGE.**

**BE HONEST WITH YOUR
HEAVENLY FATHER ABOUT
WHAT YOU HOPE WILL
HAPPEN AND WHAT YOU
HOPE WON’T HAPPEN.**

**ASK HIM TO HELP YOU TRUST HIM AND FOLLOW
HIM TOWARD THE FULL, UNCOMMON,
BETTER-THAN-EXPECTED LIFE HE HAS FOR YOU.**